Statement of

Vaughn Stokes
Director of Engineering, National Forest System
Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Before the

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House

On

October 9, 2002

Concerning

Federal Lands Highway Program

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this important hearing on the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, commonly known as TEA-21. I am Mr. Vaughn Stokes, Director of Engineering for the USDA Forest Service. TEA-21 has provided enormous benefits and reduced user costs to the American people**.** Without a safe, well-maintained highway system, far fewer Americans could afford to visit and enjoy the National Forests.

Mr. Chairman, the Forest Service manages 155 national forests and grass lands that occupy approximately 192 million acres in 42 states plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These public lands are known as the National Forest System. Diverse uses include hunting, fishing, hiking, picnicking, water production, grazing, wilderness, mining, energy development, bird watching, and timber harvesting. An estimated 80 percent of the Nation's dispersed recreation occurs on national forests and grasslands. National forests provide drinking water for an estimated 60 million Americans. The 2000 Forest Service Strategic Plan estimated a $35 billion economic contribution associated with just the recreational uses of the national forests. The natural resources of National Forest Systems lands are among the Nation's greatest assets, and transportation plays a key role in the way people access and enjoy public land and resources.

Five TEA-21 programs directly benefit the public and National Forest lands:

- Transportation Enhancement Set Asides within the Surface Transportation Program;
- The National Scenic Byways program;
- The Recreational Trails program;
- Public Lands-Discretionary Program within the Public Lands Highways Program; and
- Forest Highways within the Public Lands Highways Program.

The Forest Service believes these five programs have been extremely successful. The construction of scenic overlooks, trails, and other recreation infrastructure has greatly

enhanced the public's interpretation and enjoyment of the natural wonders accessed by our transportation system on National Forest System lands. The National Scenic Byways program has received tremendous public support. Under the Recreation Trails program, the Forest Service has benefited from outstanding partnerships with States to reconstruct and feature our 133,000-mile trail network. Under the Forest Highway and Public Lands-Discretionary Programs, thousands of miles of county and state roads have been reconstructed, providing access to the National Forest and directly benefiting local rural counties and their economies. The Forest Service is very satisfied with these programs and wholeheartedly supports their continuation. In addition, we are working with the Federal Highway Administration to develop performance measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs.

I would like to give you two examples of the types of projects the Forest Highway program accomplishes benefiting National Forests:

1) In FY 1998, a single project replaced five bridges on State and County Roads in Wisconsin, which are critical for providing National Forest access. [Project #PLHFH 1998(397)]
2) In FY 2000, a project reconstructed 6.11 miles of the county road serving the Grand Targhee ski area and adjacent National Forests lands in the states of Idaho and Wyoming. This substantially improved public access to some of the premier public recreation opportunities in the National Forest System. [Project PFH 76-1(1)]

The Forest Service road system is composed of approximately 382,000 miles of road receiving 1.7 million vehicle trips per day. Of the 382,000 miles, about 60,000 miles are public roads, which account for over 80% of the total vehicle use. These are the primary roads that the public uses to access their favorite recreation area or attraction from our nation's cities, towns, and rural communities. I call your attention to Figure 1, which displays the seamless nature of our national transportation system where Forest Service roads are a natural extension of rural state and county roads.

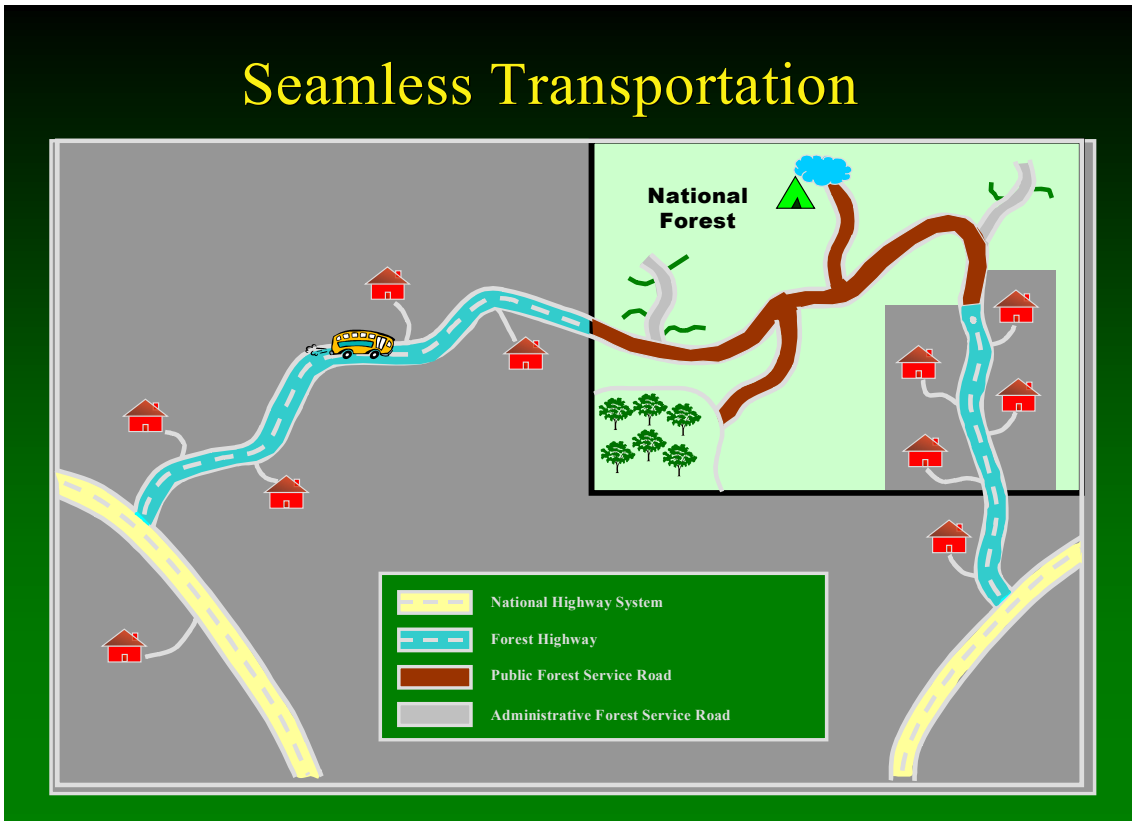

Figure 1

Funds available to the Forest Service for maintenance and operation of our road system were $230 million in FY 2002. Decreases in commodity production (particularly timber harvest) and the associated user fees or maintenance required of road users have been the primary cause for the reduced revenues. (See Figure 2) The System has a backlog of deferred maintenance and capital improvement needs of roughly $10 billion, including the needed replacement of over 1,000 bridges. Backlog notwithstanding, the Forest Service has adopted national policy requiring National Forests to perform "Roads Analysis" and establish road management objectives to best address top needs within available resources. Figure 3 displays the declining condition of our road network since 1995 and projects a continuation of the decline to 2020.

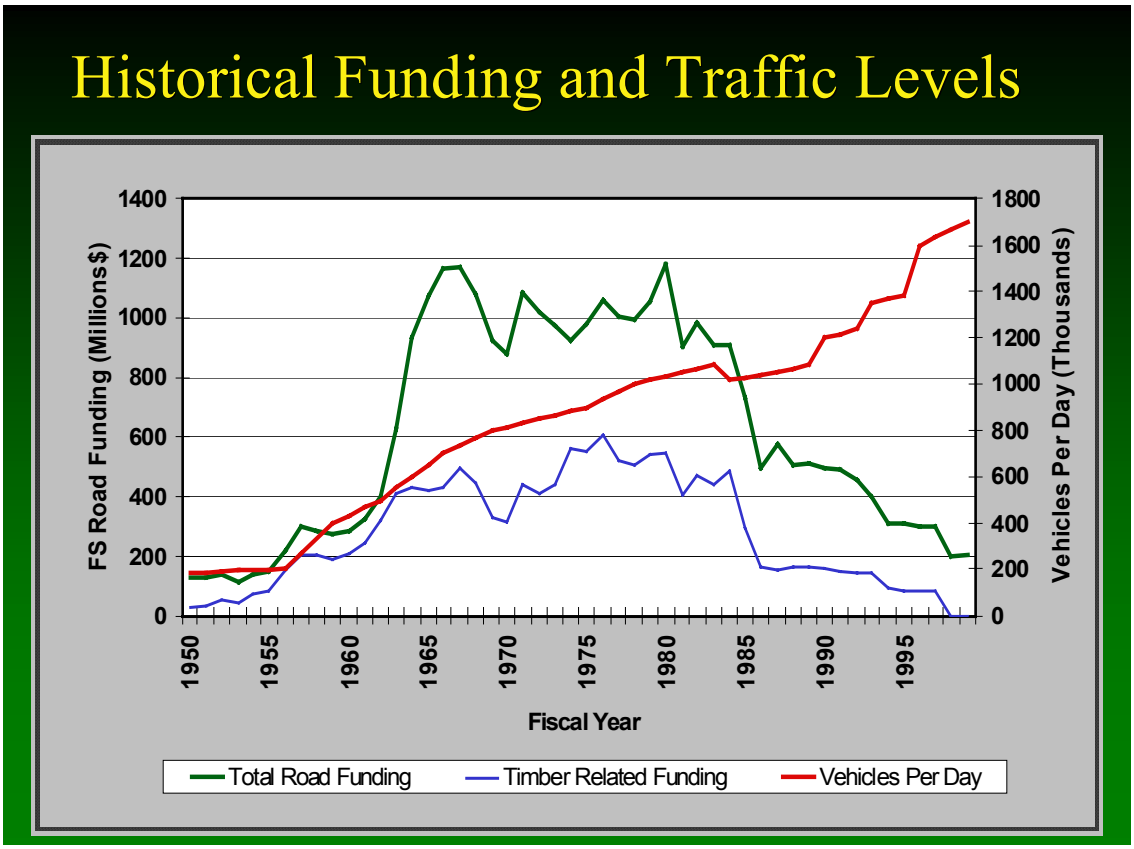

Figure 2

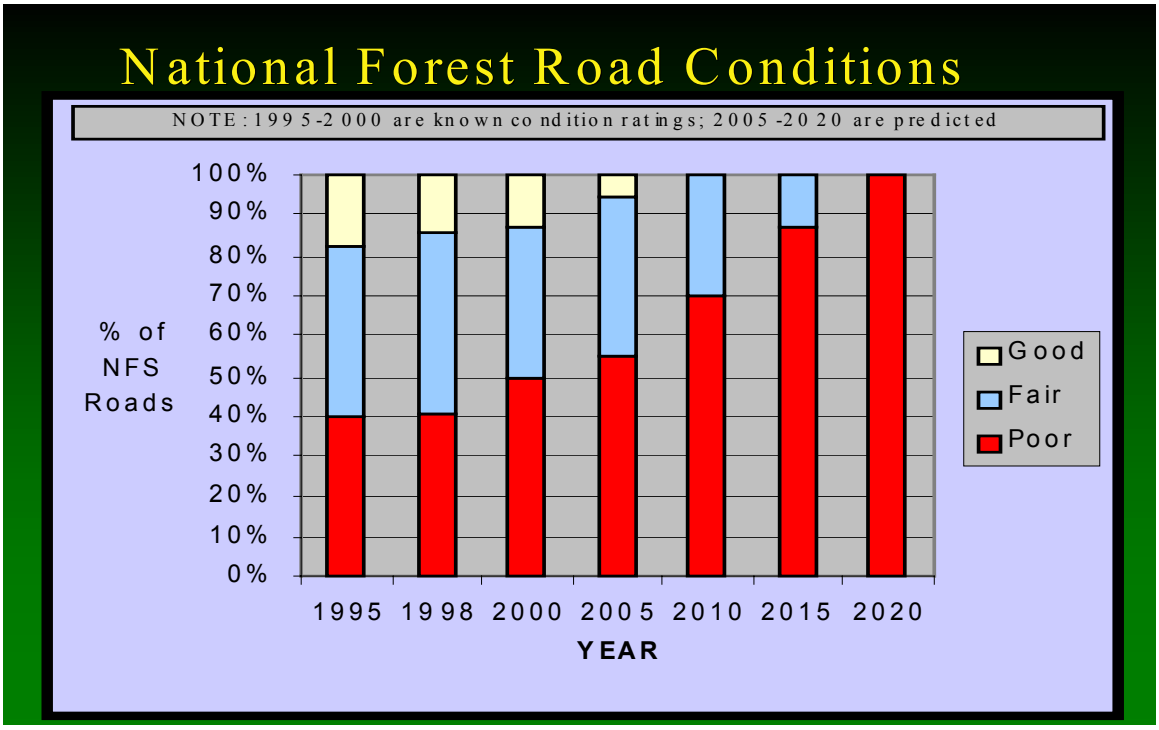

Figure 3

The National Forest System is very important to rural economies and the entire Nation. The road system is integral to these benefits. If the deterioration of our road system continues as projected to 2020, the miles of road available to passenger cars will decline by 50 percent (80,000 miles to 40,000miles), resulting in a negative economic impact of over 14 billion dollars to local economies (Forest Service estimate). People will simply not be able to drive to their favorite trailhead or campground, and transportation of wood, minerals, and other forest resources will become increasingly difficult.

I want to briefly highlight some negative impacts that occur when road conditions are poor. Examples include higher vehicular maintenance costs, travel times, and accident rates; negative impacts to aquatic habitat and fish passage resulting from increased stream, lake and reservoir sedimentation; and increased air pollution. The Committee is further aware that rural low volume roads already have the highest accident rates of all road categories in the United States.

In closing, driving for pleasure is the number one recreational use of the National Forests. Access to and through the National Forest System is a critical Federal Lands Highway issue. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Addendum

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Federal Lands Highway Program Funding
TEA-21 from 1988 to 2002

STATE	FOREST HIGHWAY	PUBLIC LANDS DISCRETIONARY	PARK ROADS & PARKWAYS	REFUGE ROADS	INDIAN RESERVATION ROADS	TOTAL FLHP
Alabama	$3.33	$1.70	$0.70	$0.00	$0.40	**$6.13**
Alaska	$44.72	$24.74	$17.81	$1.59	$97.92	**$186.78**
Arizona	$38.00	$35.20	$29.74	$2.41	$256.30	**$361.65**
Arkansas	$8.98	$2.85	$0.24	$4.58	$0.00	**$16.65**
California	$88.80	$24.71	$49.04	$1.80	$28.69	**$193.04**
Colorado	$51.19	$17.18	$15.04	$0.70	$9.44	**$93.55**
Connecticut	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	**$0.00** *
Delaware	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.63	$0.00	**$0.63**
D.C.	$0.00	$9.60	$26.19	$0.00	$0.00	**$35.79**
Florida	$4.49	$6.47	$1.05	$4.91	$2.64	**$19.56**
Georgia	$2.80	$3.07	$18.06	$2.76	$0.00	**$26.69**
Guam	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.51	$0.00	**$0.51**
Hawaii	$0.00	$10.91	$2.08	$0.97	$0.00	**$13.96**
Idaho	$61.26	$14.90	$0.00	$2.08	$8.55	**$86.79**
Illinois	$1.31	$0.00	$0.00	$1.33	$0.00	**$2.64**
Indiana	$0.91	$0.00	$1.00	$0.60	$0.00	**$2.51**
Iowa	$0.00	$0.00	$0.10	$0.59	$0.77	**$1.46**
Kansas	$0.00	$1.81	$0.03	$1.04	$0.60	**$3.48**
Kentucky	$2.32	$9.97	$3.36	$0.00	$0.00	**$15.65**
Louisiana	$2.07	$1.44	$0.00	$2.62	$1.73	**$7.86**
Maine	$0.29	$1.44	$3.66	$0.43	$2.78	**$8.59**
Maryland	$0.00	$0.00	$10.46	$3.13	$0.00	**$13.59**
Massachusetts	$0.00	$1.90	$1.56	$1.92	$0.43	**$5.81**
Michigan	$8.77	$1.61	$0.23	$0.15	$8.70	**$19.46**
Minnesota	$10.93	$0.50	$0.01	$1.57	$27.23	**$40.24**
Mississippi	$4.79	$11.18	$76.42	$1.50	$3.04	**$96.93**
Missouri	$4.06	$0.28	$0.06	$1.28	$0.00	**$5.68**
Montana	$52.10	$27.69	$14.27	$2.37	$68.86	**$165.29**
Nebraska	$0.88	$4.27	$1.51	$0.51	$3.09	**$10.26**
Nevada	$9.38	$33.04	$27.65	$2.34	$14.56	**$86.97**
New Hampshire	$3.45	$2.23	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	**$5.68**
New Jersey	$0.00	$4.84	$3.37	$1.23	$0.00	**$9.44**
New Mexico	$26.46	$15.06	$2.48	$1.56	$218.87	**$264.43**
New York	$0.00	$1.55	$6.80	$0.50	$2.33	**$11.18**
North Carolina	$8.32	$0.00	$25.22	$0.00	$6.77	**$40.31**
North Dakota	$1.78	$1.40	$3.56	$0.37	$33.15	**$40.26**
Ohio	$0.95	$0.00	$0.58	$0.05	$0.00	**$1.58**
Oklahoma	$0.87	$2.26	$4.02	$0.49	$141.86	**$149.49**
Oregon	$92.41	$13.65	$1.26	$3.23	$20.18	**$130.73**
Pennsylvania	$2.51	$0.00	$13.34	$0.68	$0.00	**$16.53**
Puerto Rico	$0.37	$0.00	$0.07	$0.00	$0.00	**$0.43**
Rhode Island	$0.00	$6.39	$0.00	$0.00	$1.00	**$7.39**
South Carolina	$2.71	$0.08	$0.04	$0.00	$0.21	**$3.04**
South Dakota	$6.62	$10.72	$7.01	$0.57	$58.16	**$83.08**
Tennessee	$3.53	$0.00	$48.01	$1.58	$0.00	**$53.12**
Texas	$3.57	$5.73	$3.74	$3.07	$2.48	**$18.59**
Utah	$21.83	$28.98	$13.38	$1.08	$8.42	**$73.69**
Vermont	$1.24	$2.47	$0.00	$0.18	$0.00	**$3.89**
U.S. Virgin Islands	$0.00	$0.00	$0.22	$0.00	$0.00	**$0.22**
Virginia	$8.44	$22.82	$74.33	$0.56	$0.00	**$106.15**
Washington	$49.48	$2.43	$19.38	$3.55	$31.26	**$106.10**
West Virginia	$3.97	$10.31	$0.00	$0.05	$0.00	**$14.33**
Wisconsin	$5.28	$1.04	$1.24	$1.57	$23.07	**$32.20**
Wyoming	$22.47	$10.77	$76.22	$0.70	$17.27	**$127.43**
TOTAL	**$667.63**	**$389.19**	**$604.53**	**$65.33**	**$1,100.75**	**$2,827.42**

* $2,000 received in IRR Program